

Suggested Code of Conduct for Environment Friendly Immersion of Idols



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Maharashtra Pollution Control Board

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01. Background

Ganesh festival is celebrated traditionally in the state of Maharashtra all in a big way as a social and community activity. When started by Lokmanya Tilak, the objective of the festival was mainly to bring people together and promote freedom movement.

Now with the passage of time, the celebration of Ganesh festival has changed in terms of its scale as well as involvement of the people. These activities also cause concerns in terms of water pollution, air pollution, noise pollution etc. It is therefore important that we celebrate the festival keeping in view the need for environment protection and also prevention and control of pollution.

There are various laws in place concerning festivities, celebrations/environment protection etc. However, these legislations will be most successful, if they are supported by people through successful implementation. We have therefore proposed certain guidelines to facilitate celebration of Ganesh festival in an environment friendly manner. We urge all concerned to consider these guidelines and help environment protection.

02. Guidelines and Recommendations

2.1 Ganesh Idols are immersed in water bodies. Such water bodies include rivers, lakes, ponds, estuaries, open coastal beaches, wells

etc. Consequent pollution of such water bodies has been a matter of concern and there have been public interest litigations as well. In addition to silting, toxic chemicals used in making idols tend to leach out and pose serious problems of water pollution. Studies carried out to assess deterioration in water quality due to immersion of idols have revealed that water quality gets deterioration in respect of conductivity, bio-chemical oxygen demand and concentration of heavy metals.

2.2 Guidelines and Recommendations

- i) Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) shall undertake water quality assessment preferably in Class-I cities (having population more than one lac). Water quality monitoring shall be conducted at three stages – pre-immersion, during immersion and post immersion. Considering the size of water body, an appropriate number of sampling locations shall be determined in order to get a fairly representative assessment of water quality. For ascertaining water quality, physico-chemical parameters such as pH, Dissolved Oxygen, Bio-chemical oxygen demand, Chemical Oxygen Demand, conductivity, turbidity, total dissolved solids, total solids and metals (cadmium, chromium, iron, nickel, lead, zinc and copper) may be analysed. (Action : Regional / Sub-Regional Offices of MPCB)
- ii) By and large, efforts have been made by local bodies to identify adequate number of designated immersion centres to avoid overcrowding and also to reduce pollution loading on water bodies. Such places should be notified and adequate publicity arranged every year preferably a month before such festivals. (Action : Local body)

- iii) It would be appropriate to use traditional clay for idol making rather than baked clay. Use of painted idols should be discouraged. In case painted idols are used, water soluble and non-toxic natural dyes may be used. Use of toxic and non-degradable chemical dyes should be strictly prohibited. Natural colors used in food products and permitted in Pharmaceuticals may be preferred. (Action : NGOs, Consumer group)

- iv) In case of idol immersion in sea, immersion may be done beyond 500 meters of low-tide line. The low-tide line may be informed well in advance. Also, proper motor boats with security personnel/ home guards may be deployed to supervise immersion. (Action : Local Body)

- v) A co-ordination committee comprising Police, Non-Government Organisations and representatives of religious groups may be set up for guiding the public in carrying out immersion with minimal adverse impacts on water bodies. (Action : State Government)

- vi) In case of immersion of idols in rivers and lakes, arrangements may be made for construction of temporary confined ponds/bunds for the purpose of immersion of idols including disposal of material used for worship. After the completion of immersion, supernatant river water/ pond water may be disposed in river/pond/lake after checking for colour and turbidity. If necessary, treatment should also be provided prior to disposal. (Action : Local Body)

- vii) Prior to immersion, worship material like, flowers, vastras (clothes), decorating material (made of paper and plastics),

- etc. should be removed. Such material may be separately collected either for recycling or composting if bio-degradable or for disposal, if non bio-degradable. (Action : NGOs, Local Body, Media)
- viii) Within 24 hours of the immersion of idols, the left over material (near rivers, lakes, beaches, etc.) should be collected by the local bodies and disposed of. If required, local body may levy costs. (Action : Local Body)
- ix) At the immersion sites, burning of solid wastes should not be allowed. (Action : Police, MPCB)
- x) People should be encouraged to go for smaller size idols. (Action: NGO, Media)
- xi) Through media people should be educated about the ill effects of such activities on holy water bodies & encouraged to go for "kar-sewa" in order to minimize the adverse effects. (Action : MPCB, Media, Publicity Department, Local Bodies, NGOs)

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